Software to help you trace your family tree

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MACFAMILYTREE 4.0.6, OnlyMac Software

If you don't know your first cousin twice removed from your second cousin once removed, genealogy software is vital to making sense of your extended family.

Name-brand Windows developers have yet to meet this demand in the Mac market, but this application, developed by a small German shareware firm, is a respectable alternative to better-known, Windows-only programs such as Family Tree Maker.

MacFamilyTree sensibly emphasizes compatibility: It can read and write the standard GEDCOM file format used by other genealogy software, making it easier to import other family members' records.

We tested this by opening a large family tree from a Windows genealogy application, and MacFamilyTree imported the data almost perfectly, losing only people's nicknames in the process.

This program's charting capabilities include such basics as descendant and heritage charts as well as a nifty timeline that graphs the overlapping lifespans of your ancestors.

MacFamilyTree could, however, use a few more options — for instance, it can't produce a fan chart, a common way of visualizing ancestry.

Once you've sorted out your predecessors' paths, a "publish" button lets you share your database by burning it to CD or creating a professional-looking Web site.

OnlyMac's developers wrapped these features in an interface that echoes some of the best parts of other Mac programs, such as the iPhoto-style zoom sliders for charts and an iTunes-esque real-time search function.

The programmers did, however, miss a few things: Keyboard entry can be dreadfully slow, not all of the icons are labeled and the documentation is minimal.

Details: Mac OS X 10.2.8 or newer, $45 at www. onlymac.de.

Education news

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